

ROOF RATS



Resident Questionnaire & Mitigation Recommendations

In collaboration with Maricopa County Vector Control and the Arcadia NEIGHBORtoNEIGHBOR campaign, the City of Scottsdale offers residents the following questionnaire and mitigation recommendations as a way to help citizens control the roof rat population on private property.

Questionnaire:

1. Do you have citrus and/or fruit-bearing trees on your property?

- Citrus includes all types including lemons, limes, grapefruits, oranges, ornamental oranges, tangelos, tangerines, etc.
- Other fruit-bearing trees: figs, pomegranates, nectarines, peaches and all nut-bearing trees
- Fruit DOES NOT have to be ripe to be eaten by the rats. Fruit can be green (unripe) or even rotted. Rats do not have a discerning taste for fruit like humans.
- **WHY?** Rats eat fruit more for their water content than for food sustenance.
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Pick ALL fruit from ALL fruit-bearing trees EVERY season for as long as they live in their house. Residents picking fruit up off the ground is NOT enough! (If resident can't physically pick their own trees, they can go thru the yellow pages for landscapers who might. Those landscapers who will pick – not all do – typically charge between \$15-\$25 per tree. Residents can also call their faith community for any youth groups who might be looking for community service work or Boy/ Girl/Eagle Scouts as well. As long as there remains fruit on the trees, residents still could potentially have a roof rat problem
 - Prune back all tree braches from roof of house at least 6 feet.
- **NOTE: Nut-bearing trees** are a contributor to roof rat concerns on private properties. However, short of cutting the tree down, there is virtually NO way to rid an existing nut-bearing tree from its food source.

2. Do you have any standing water on your property?

- This can include birdbaths, dog/cat water bowls, fountains, water features and pools
- **WHY?** All water sources on private properties are a welcomed invitation to a roof rat.
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Drain all water sources EXCEPT pools (also helps prevent mosquito breeding issues).
 - Change house pet's drinking habits by training them go inside for a drink, if resident's dog/cat is used to drinking water from a bowl outside.
 - Stop feeding and watering all stray/neighborhood cats.
 - Keep pool water level down to at least 6-inches below the decking surface. If a rat falls in to get a drink, it won't be able to get out of the pool and can drown.

3. Do you have any animals/pets?

- This includes birds, dogs, cats, rabbits, etc.
- **WHY?** Roof Rats will eat animal feces
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Pick up ALL pet feces off the ground at ALL times

4. Do you have any animal food sources outdoors on your property?

- This includes storing or putting out dog/cat/bird food
- **WHY?** Roof Rats will find/eat all domestic and wild animal food.
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Not feed birds from a bird feeder that is not enclosed and hanging from a patio/porch
 - Place stored dog/cat/bird food in a metal container with a secure metal lid (rats will eat through any plastic bin)

5. Do you have any tall/thick shrubs on your property?

- This includes oleanders, bougainvillea, all veining foliage and any other thick plants above 4 feet.
- **WHY?** Roof Rats are NOT indigenous to Arizona, and therefore try to escape the heat by harboring in thick shrubs where there is more moisture and protection from their enemies. They will nest there to have their off spring.
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Take down or, at the very least, prune all shrubs to where they can see sunlight coming through the shrubs.
 - Prune shrubs up from the ground at least 12-inches
 - Take down all vines/shrubs growing against the home or perimeter walls in front and back yards.

6. Do you have any cracks, crevasses or gaps (at least the diameter of a nickel) on the exterior walls or underneath the eaves of your home or outbuildings?

- This includes new and older homes/outbuildings, sheds, etc. that have settled over the years (both block and wood construction)
- **WHY?** Roof Rats can crush their bodies down into small spaces to get into places where they are safe from predators and able to nest.
- **Recommendations:** It is recommended that residents should:
 - Seal up all cracks, crevasses and gaps outside of the home from the ground up to underneath the eaves of the home.
 - Check for any looseness of air vents/screens that are located underneath the overhang of the home (if the home has an attic or crawl space). If screens are loose, either reinforce or replace.
 - Check all window and door screens for small holes (the width of a nickel). Replace any that need replacing.
 - Always shut doors when exiting/ entering the home. Roof rats are fast and can scamper in the home unbeknownst to the homeowner.

- **Recommended Materials to use:**

- Recommendations to seal up cracks, crevasses and gaps:**

- Take steel wool (found at any home improvement store) and a flathead screwdriver and push into all questionable areas. For aesthetic purposes, you can use paintable caulk to go over the areas containing the steel wool and then paint over caulk with any leftover house paint.

- Recommendations to prohibit rodents from entering the home through pipes/chimney on the roof:**

- Take a sheet of heavy gauge screening (found in sheets at any home improvement store) and cut (with wire cutters) into smaller sheets that can be placed and bent over the top of pipes coming out of rooftop. (the screens will keep the rodents out, while still maintaining the necessary and required ventilation.
 - Secure screening down over pipes with either pipe bands or heavy gauge wire (found at any home improvement store). Pipe bands are adjustable and can be purchased in various sizes depending on your needs. Heavy gauge wire can also be used to “twist-tie” around the screen and pipe.
 - Heavy gauge screening can also be used on the tops of fire chimneys and clothes dryer vents. ****NOTE: Screens on clothes dryer vents should be checked often and cleaned for accumulated lint. Not cleaning the screen often could result in the malfunction of your dryer and/or possibly result in a fire.***

How-To's & Should I's:

1. Should I deploy bait in my back and front yards to kill Roof Rats?

- Maricopa County Vector Control has donated over 2800 bait stations to Scottsdale residents to help control roof rat activity since the summer of 2004.
- Roof Rat bait stations are available AS SUPPLIES LAST to Scottsdale residents for pickup on a first come, first served basis (limit 4 per single family household).
- Bait stations will NOT be provided to homeowners associations, organized neighborhood groups or multi-family properties due to limited supplies.
- Residents are responsible for bait and deployment on their properties. An instruction sheet will be provided to every resident along with each bait station.
- Bait Stations can be picked up at the Papago Citizen Service Center, 7111 E. McDowell Rd., M-Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. , Sat.: 9 to 3 p.m.
- **NOTE:** Bait stations are to be used for the purpose of “housing” toxic bait, not trapping the roof rat. The roof rat will enter the station, eat the bait and then leave. Within 3-6 days after ingestion, the roof rat will internally bleed to death.
- It is recommended to check bait stations weekly.
- **BAIT:** any anti-coagulant containing the active ingredient "Bromadiolone" can be purchased at some local hardware or tack and feed stores.
- **NOTE:** TOXIC BAIT SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN THE HOME OR IN HOME'S CRAWL SPACE OR ATTIC. ALWAYS FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS
- Use rubber gloves and dispose of dead rats in plastic zipper bags.
- In cases of emergency, call the local Poison Control Center at (602) 253-3334.

2. How do I get rid of a roof rat in my attic or home?

- TOXIC BAIT SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN THE HOME OR IN HOME'S CRAWL SPACE OR ATTIC.
- It is recommended for residents to use lethal snap traps (found at most home improvement stores for a few dollars each) in any crawl space or attic.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets. ALWAYS FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS
- Snap traps come in 2 sizes (small & large). The small are for mice and the large are for rats.

3. What kind of bait do I use for the snap traps and how do I deploy them?

- It is recommended that snap traps be baited with a mixture most people can make in their own kitchen.
- Snap Trap Bait Recipe:
 - Dry Oats
 - Creamy Peanut Butter
 - Nut or Peanut (i.e. almond, walnut or any larger-sized nut)
 - Dental Floss
 - Mixing Bowl
- Mix the oats and creamy peanut butter together in a bowl until it reaches the consistency of cookie dough
- Roll a small “dough ball” in the hands (about the circumference of a quarter)
- Slip the nut of choice into the middle of the “dough ball”
- Re-roll the ball a bit in the hands
- Place the “dough ball” (AKA: “bait”) on the lever of the snap trap where the bait is designed to rest.
- Use the dental floss to “tie down” or secure the bait to the lever (the nut inside the “bait” will keep the dental floss from going completely through)
- It is important to secure the bait onto the trap's lever to prolong the time the rat will spend at the trap. Often the rat is quick enough to evade a lethal snap, hence defeating the trap's purpose.
- It is recommended that snap traps be placed in within arms length of the entrance into the crawl space/attic.
- It is also recommended that each snap trap be secured down to the wood framing/rafter within the attic. If a rat evades the lethal snap of the trap, yet is still caught in the apparatus, the rat will scamper away connected to the trap and can fall in between walls and eventually die, thus causing an unnecessary odor AND expense to the homeowner.
- It is recommended to check snap traps daily.

4. How do I dispose of a dead rat?

- It is recommended to use a large zipper freezer bag. Zipper bags can also serve as a protective glove when turned inside out. The rat can then be picked up and pulled through the bag (making the bag right side out), zipped shut and thrown away.

For general information about roof rats and more preventative steps:

- Maricopa County Environmental Services/Vector Control at (602) 506-6616, online at www.maricopa.gov/envsvc
- NEIGHBORtoNEIGHBOR campaign at (602) 273-0435, online at www.roofrat.net/
- City of Scottsdale online at www.scottsdaleaz.gov/Health/roofrats/default.asp